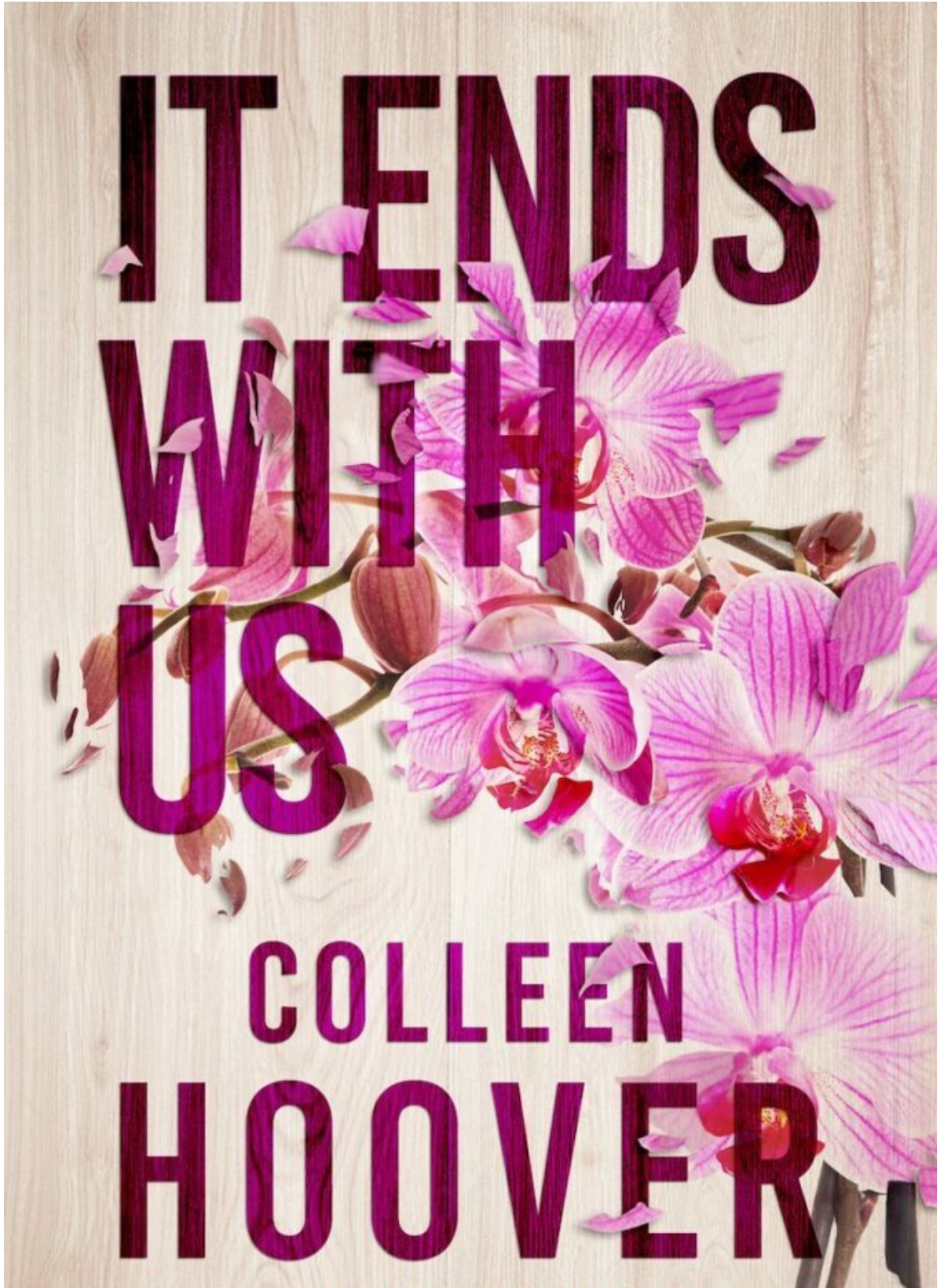


**IT ENDS WITH US**



## Chapter One

As I sit here with one foot on either side of the ledge, looking down from twelve stories above the streets of Boston, I can't help but think about suicide.

Not my own. I like my life enough to want to see it through.

I'm more focused on other people, and how they ultimately come to the decision to just end their own lives. Do they ever regret it? In the moment after letting go and the second before they make impact, there has to be a little bit of remorse in that brief free fall. Do they look at the ground as it rushes toward them and think, "Well, crap. This was a bad idea."

Somehow, I think not.

I think about death a lot. Particularly today, considering I just—twelve hours earlier—gave one of the most epic eulogies the people of Plethora, Maine, have ever witnessed. Okay, maybe it wasn't the most epic. It very well could be considered the most disastrous. I guess

that would depend on whether you were asking my mother or me. My mother, who probably won't speak to me for a solid year after today. Don't get me wrong; the eulogy I delivered wasn't profound enough to make history, like the one Brooke Shields delivered at Michael Jackson's funeral. Or the one delivered by Steve Jobs's sister.

Or Pat Tillman's brother. But it was epic in its own way.

I was nervous at first. It was the funeral of the prodigious Andrew Bloom, after all. Adored mayor of my hometown of Plethora, Maine. Owner of the most successful real-estate agency within city limits. Husband of the highly adored Jenny Bloom, the most revered teaching assistant in all of Plethora. And father of Lily Bloom—that strange girl with the erratic red hair who once fell in love with a homeless guy and brought great shame upon her entire family. That would be me. I'm Lily Bloom, and Andrew was my father.

As soon as I finished delivering his eulogy today, I caught a flight straight back to Boston and hijacked the first roof I could find. Again, not because I'm suicidal. I have no plans to scale off this roof. I just really needed fresh air and silence, and dammit if I can't get that from my third floor apartment with absolutely no rooftop access and a roommate who likes to hear herself sing.

I didn't account for how cold it would be up here, though. It's not unbearable, but it's not comfortable, either. At least I can see the stars. Dead fathers and exasperating roommates and questionable eulogies don't feel so awful when the night sky is clear enough to literally feel the grandeur of the universe.

I love it when the sky makes me feel insignificant.

I like tonight.

Well . . . let me rephrase this so that it more appropriately reflects my feelings in past tense.

I liked tonight.

But unfortunately for me, the door was just shoved open so hard, I expect the stairwell to spit a human out onto the rooftop. The door slams shut again and footsteps move swiftly across the deck. I don't even bother looking up. Whoever it is more than likely won't even notice me back here straddling the ledge to the left of the door. They came out here in such a hurry, it isn't my fault if they assume they're alone.

I sigh quietly, close my eyes and lean my head against the stucco wall behind me, cursing the universe for ripping this peaceful, introspective moment out from under me. The least the universe could do for me today is ensure that it's a woman and not a man. If I'm going to have company, I'd rather it be a female. I'm tough for my size and can probably hold my own in most cases, but I'm too comfortable right now to be on a rooftop alone with a strange man in the middle of the night. I might fear for my safety and feel the need to leave, and I really don't want to leave. As I said before . . . I'm

comfortable.

I finally allow my eyes to make the journey to the silhouette leaning over the ledge. As luck would have it, he's definitely male. Even leaning over the rail, I can tell he's tall. Broad shoulders create a strong contrast to the fragile way he's holding his head in his hand>>

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